

Kansas Plant Pest Alert

Kansas Department of Agriculture • Plant Protection and Weed Control • (785) 564-6698 • agriculture.ks.gov

Spotted Knapweed



What is spotted knapweed?

Spotted knapweed is a plant that originated in Eurasia that has been found infesting rangeland, pastures, roadsides and other disturbed soils.

Knapweeds release a toxin into the soil that inhibits the growth of other vegetation.

The weed is a seed-making machine, producing 1,000 or more seeds per plant. Seed can remain viable in the soil for five years or more, so infestations can occur several years after the plants have been eliminated.

What does it look like?

Spotted knapweed is a short-lived perennial that stands from 1 foot to 4 feet tall. The rosette leaves are deeply lobed and may be 6 inches long. The stems are moderately leaved. Flowers typically are pink with spots on the flower bracts. Many flowers are produced from early July through August. The flower petals are surrounded by stiff, black-tipped bracts,

giving the flower head a spotted appearance.

How do I treat a small infestation?

Spotted knapweed confined to small, well defined areas should be treated as soon as its detected to prevent it from spreading. The plants should be removed and destroyed, and the area should be treated with a herbicide to pre-

vent re-infestation from seedlings.

Is spotted knapweed in Kansas?

The Kansas Department of Agriculture surveyed for the weed in counties along the Missouri and Nebraska borders, and in counties near Kansas City and Topeka, during 2009 and 2010. Douglas, Shawnee and Johnson counties were found to have infestations during these



surveys. A known infestation is in Nemaha County, and it is being addressed with biological controls, the lesser knapweed flower weevil (*Larinus minutus*) and the knapweed

**If you find
spotted knapweed,
notify the
Kansas
Department of
Agriculture!**

root weevil (*Cyphocleonus achates*). A few other small infestations are being monitored and managed in other counties.

What should I do if I suspect spotted knapweed?

1. Photograph the plant at the site.
2. Record the location, noting landmarks and the legal description for the property.
3. Describe how the land is used (cropland, road ditch, waste area, stream bank).
4. Describe the location (rocky, wet, dry, sandy).
5. Collect a specimen, including roots, if possible, and press between sheets of newspaper.
6. Contact the state weed specialist at the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Plant Protection and Weed Control program at